

CIVIC HACKING: A RETROSPECT AND AN ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION

Po-yu Tseng
Doublethink lab

It is my pleasure to present the Collaborative Participation and Challenge of Digital Democracy in Taiwan today. I want to thank Move.net and Taiwan Foundation for Democracy for hosting this event.

I'm Poyu. You could call me Fi. I was one of the spokesperson at the sun flower movement back in 2014. And had run election couple times. As you can see I didn't get elected. But somehow from the election I started to focus on Open government and become a researcher for *Open Culture Foundation* and now is working in Doublethink lab. I only have 15 min so I will try to talk faster. If there's something that's unclear for you feel free to stop me or ask me at the QA time after this.

Today's presentation will be divided into 4 parts. First I will talk about what happened in Taiwan that we started to look into open government and digital democracy. Second I will introduce a report that I did about open government in Taiwan and the Findings of the research. Last but not least I will talk about the challenge we are facing right now.

So what happened in Taiwan. In 2014 Under previous president's pro China policy our government tried to force pass Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement with China.

It is a humiliation to our democracy because as they wouldn't do any impact analysis for labor and industries as lots of CSO request in the hearing. But they wouldn't allow legislator to discuss the deal but force pass it in 30 sec.

It resulted in a huge occupation movement. Hundreds of thousands citizens occupy the parliament for 24 days. Demanding the parliament to be truly open to people and to be transparent.

During the time of occupation we even host a citizen meeting that more than hundreds of people discuss about constitution reform.

After this movement The trade deal was postpone and public opinion started to care about open government. We start asking ourselves *How would you picture the Democracy in 20 years*

For me I think open government actually has 3 components: gov transparency open decision making and open for citizen to engaged.

That's why we conduct open government report 2014 -2016 to examine what had government done to achieve this and did it work. This report had 4 chapters. First is law and policy the foundation of open gov. Second is open data. Third is citizen participation and some case study. Finally we talk about Civic Tech Collaboration with Governments.

This report is actually written in Chinese and English and is all open online. If you are interested you can scan this QR-code. Or google Taiwan open government report. This report had 300+ pages so I'm not going to go through it all. I will focus on cases of citizen participation and the findings of the report.

So first I want to talk about citizen participation cases. In order to differentiate cases of traditional participation we had define this new model as built on deliberative democracy and open government idea and use online tools to lower the bar of participate.

There are 3 online tools we use at the time I-voting Join and v Taiwan.

i voting system is build by Taipei city gov

it is an online Referendum system. the proposal can be both from Citizen or from department of city gov

but because threshold of proposal it's really high for citizen to propose. it required thousands of signature to propose

so by the end of 2016 there are only 9 i-voting cases all purposed by taipei city government

the qualification of voting is different from cases but all required Taipei citizenship

I want to introduce how i-voting system work by Shezidao Development Deriction cases

Shezidao is a district in taipei that use to be Prohibited for construction and agriculture due to it's frequency of flooding.

But because of the residence of demanding to broaden the limitaion Taipei city government decide to put how to develope as a case of ivioting.

So How does this work

The purposal is called development direction ivoting it was purposed by department of Urban development there was 2 set of voting

first was voted by residence of

second was voted by all taipei citizen

both result will be reference of urban design review committee

Join platform is built by National Development Council

there s 3 feature : Propose + Talk + Supervise

the most important one is propose. anyone with ROC nationality can propose

but you will need 5000 seconds in 60days in order to have responce from gov related department from gov will response within 2 months

In this pic you can see there s also Talk + Supervise section up there. Talk is for citizen to give feedback for policy that gov was planning

Supervise will link you to gov budget and existed policy

This case that I show at the screen is Menstrual cup proposal

it used to be illegal to sell Menstrual cup online in Taiwan and someone propose to legalize it on Join platform

And got 6150 seconds in 60 days. Here s the second list

So the Minister of Health and Welfare had to respond within 2 months. Here s the pic of their respond.

Not only do they need to respond but they will need to come up with what they are planning to do in order to deal with this porposal

V Taiwan is built by National Development Council in collaboration with g0v community

it s a platform to discuss regulations that associate with internet

Gov proposed an idea on regulation and the Discussion is between Citizen + Gov official

As an example here s a discussion about the legalization of Uber on vTaiwan As you can see it is divide into 3 column :First is the accurate time

on second column the discussion will be divided in different time period

in this case it was divided into opinion gathering drafting and historical events. The Ministry of Transportation and Communications

hold a draft meeting to discuss on this issue it was both online and offline Historical events as they amend the Administration of Motor Transport Act

One of the important factor of v Taiwan is it brings in different tools

pol.is is a platform to discuss. Autrey had introduce at the previous session say.it is a project of mysociety : A tool for making transcripts easy to read search and share on the internet

hackpad do collaborative note-taking of meeting

We ask Four W: Where does the participation happen Who participate When/ in what stage does the participation happens and How does it happen

First question we want to ask here is where do these platforms operate

- both online and offline:
- although they are all online tools the operators know that online participation has its limits: couldn t reach to all stakeholders hard to have discussion with quality and engaged conversations

the reason for offline participations is

- 1 so as to engage diverse groups of people
- 2 different channels enable various viewpoints to be expressed

- however except for vTaiwan the other two platforms don t have regular procedures of online and offline. offline meetings are not well institutionalized and may become random.

As for the question who we are asking

who build the tool who set the agenda and who can express opinions on the issue discussed

- tool-building is important but not often paid attention. civic tech is a collaborative process of solving public issues. and the tool often decide the quality and the procedures of participation
- agenda-setting is crucial. it decides what to discuss how and who
- who can participate on a specific issue

We divide the policy making process into several stages from problem analysis to planning legislation implementation and evaluation.

Join is more like petition website for the government to have a rough idea of public opinions.

iVoting has the function like Join but it can also be used at the planning stage vTaiwan aims at reforming the laws so it has a more complete well-designed procedures from gathering opinions to drafting a law

How does it work

If we compare these 3 tools we will see

iVoting doesn't have information on line doesn't have channels for opinion and can't enable discussion

Join does have information on line but one could only second and they don't host meeting online.

vTaiwan is by far the most complete one since it have information on line have various channels for opinion and can discuss on line with pol.is and sli.do

But there are Two biggest issues for vTaiwan:

First how can vTaiwan gain more active participants from the stakeholders of each issue

Third how can this new mechanism for participation be integrated with existing mechanism

What are some findings of the report

First Online tools has to mix with offline effort

Second Impact depends on cases not on tools

Three Political support of high leaders is the key while good moderators are the bridge

In order to make a difference political leader's will on implementing the result and to bring different department together is the key to a successful case. Usually in bureaucracy system department don't communicate with each other well so the leader have to bring them on the same page of open gov. And the moderator who understand the languages of gov staff and citizen is also important.

Four Public attention may bring more participation but could also hinder quality discussion

Five How old and new mechanisms and systems are integrated is the challenge.

And that's mainly the effort on the government side after sun flower movement. But what's the challenge that we faced now

In the past couple years we had increasing cases of state-funded disinformation and it had become a serious threat to our digital democracy. How Because it increase distrust and decrease the chances of rational discussion online. It also resulted in people want government to open less because they are afraid that someone will use the system to manipulate our democracy.

There are several proven attacks this is the most famous one:

In Sep 5 2018 when there's typhoon landed in Japan and the bridge to Kansai airport is collapsed. The Weibo account operate by Communist Youth League of China first posted the fake story online about how a Chinese ambassador saved people overseas indicating Taiwanese people can only be saved if they are Chinese.

In three hours more than 600 posts used the same content to publish that story. A content farm operated by overseas Chinese make headlines. After this China waited to see if any Taiwanese netizens publish the story online and in several hours it sent its cyber force to publish the story on BBS the largest bulletin board in Taiwan. After that pro-China political talk shows made it into a huge event.

What should we do about this kind of foreign influence operation On the society side we had established a new organization called Doublethink Lab.

We had three teams First we had Tech team to Create tools to track down evidence and analyze behavior model

and we had a legislation team to Create legal Mechanisms for Democratic Resilience such as the new FARA act that was in the progress of legislation.

And finally we had social communication team that are trying to find out who is more likely to be influenced by disinformation What s the factor that make them believe in disinformation and how do we built counter narratives of this.

It is a work in progress. We are still collecting datas from this election and conducting a social behavior experiment. Hopefully next time I can share with you what we found.